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TAGS: [PREL](#) [GCC](#) [IR](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: UAE TELLS IRANIAN ENVOY MIDDLE EAST MUST BE
WMD-FREE

REF: A. ABU DHABI 850

[1](#)B. DUBAI 347

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Iranian President Ahmadinejad's special envoy, Deputy Foreign Minister Mahdi Mustafavi, met separately March 6 with UAE President Sheikh Khalifa and UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid (MbR), to deliver letters from Ahmadinejad containing Iran's position on its nuclear power program and its talks with the international community. MbR called for a WMD-free Middle East as opposed to a WMD-free Gulf region, thus sidestepping the issue of directly addressing the Iranian program. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) MbR reportedly told Mustafavi that the UAE's policy was based "on making the Middle East region free from all banned weapons in order to achieve stability, global peace, and peaceful co-existence among all peoples of the world." According to press reports, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and gave assurances that they would continue to cooperate and work to maintain stability in the Gulf region. The Iranian news agency IRNA reported that MbR called for strengthening bilateral relations, and that Mustafavi invited him for a state visit to Tehran.

[1](#)3. (C) According to UAE press reporting, Mustafavi briefed the UAE leaders on Iranian negotiations with the international community on its nuclear program. IRNA quoted President Khalifa (incorrectly identified as Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan) as saying that the nuclear issue should be resolved within the framework of the IAEA. In addition, IRNA reported that Mustafavi said Iran was "bound to clarify the ambiguities and concerns facing the regional public opinions and media on Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant," and deputy head of Iran Atomic Energy Organization for Technical Affairs Khalili (first name not given) reported on the quality of construction of Bushehr. (Comment: This was presumably to counter concerns publicly voiced by then-UAE Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah al-Noaimi at the conclusion of the GCC Summit in Abu Dhabi last December when he spoke about the potential threat posed by Iran's Bushehr nuclear power facility. End comment.)

[1](#)4. (U) The two major English dailies highlighted the UAE's call for a WMD-free region. The meetings were the main story in "Gulf News" March 7 ("UAE for WMD-free region"). The Iranian envoy's visit was also the top story in the Arabic semi-official daily "al-Ittihad", but the headline and story did not mention Sheikh Mohammed's call for a WMD-free region ("Khalifa briefed on Iranian nuclear developments and calls for stability in the region").

[1](#)5. (U) There was no mention in the press or by either the UAE or the Iranian official news agencies of any discussion of

the Abu Musa and Tunbs islands dispute or of the Emirati fishermen recently detained by Iran.

Comment:

¶6. (C) By calling for a WMD-free Middle East as opposed to a WMD-free Gulf region, UAE sidestepped the issue of directly addressing the Iranian program. While that approach may be designed to send a message to Iran not to develop nuclear weapons, it softens the "blow" by retaining a focus on Israel's program. Since Iran also publicly opposes nuclear weapons and calls for a WMD-free Middle East, the statement is not confrontational. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan's comments in France in January (ref B), when he was quoted by press as saying, "The presence of nuclear capabilities in the Middle East region is harmful. ... We are against Iran acquiring that capability," were far more specifically targeted at Iran's program. Asked whether the Iranian nuclear program posed a danger to the Gulf region, he replied, "any nuclear program in the Gulf region would pose a danger." Post is still seeking readouts on the meeting. FonMin Sheikh Abdullah and Assistant U/S Tariq al-Haidan, former UAE ambassador in Tehran, are both in Tunis, returning to UAE tomorrow.

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